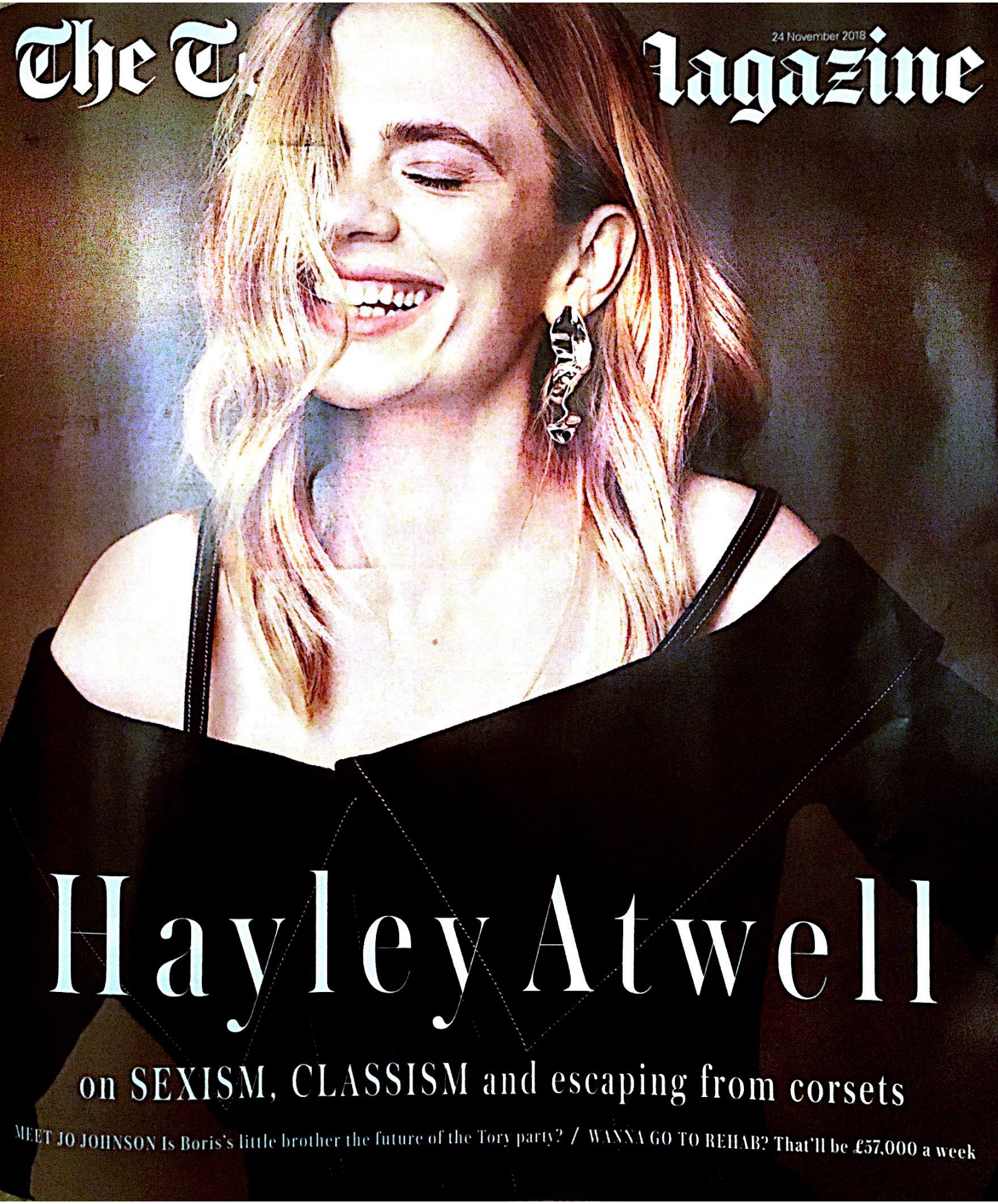
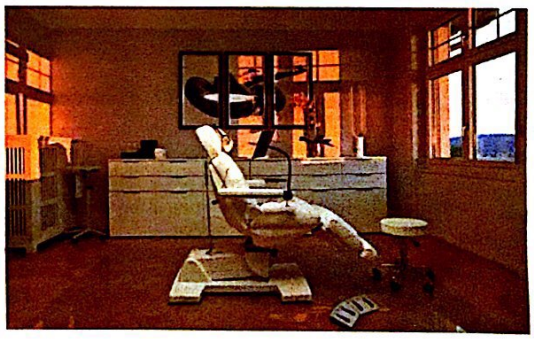


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Personal chef. Bentley on call. Penthouse with views of Lake Zurich. Anonymity guaranteed

By Annabel Fenwick Elliot



Welcome to the £57,000-a-week rehab

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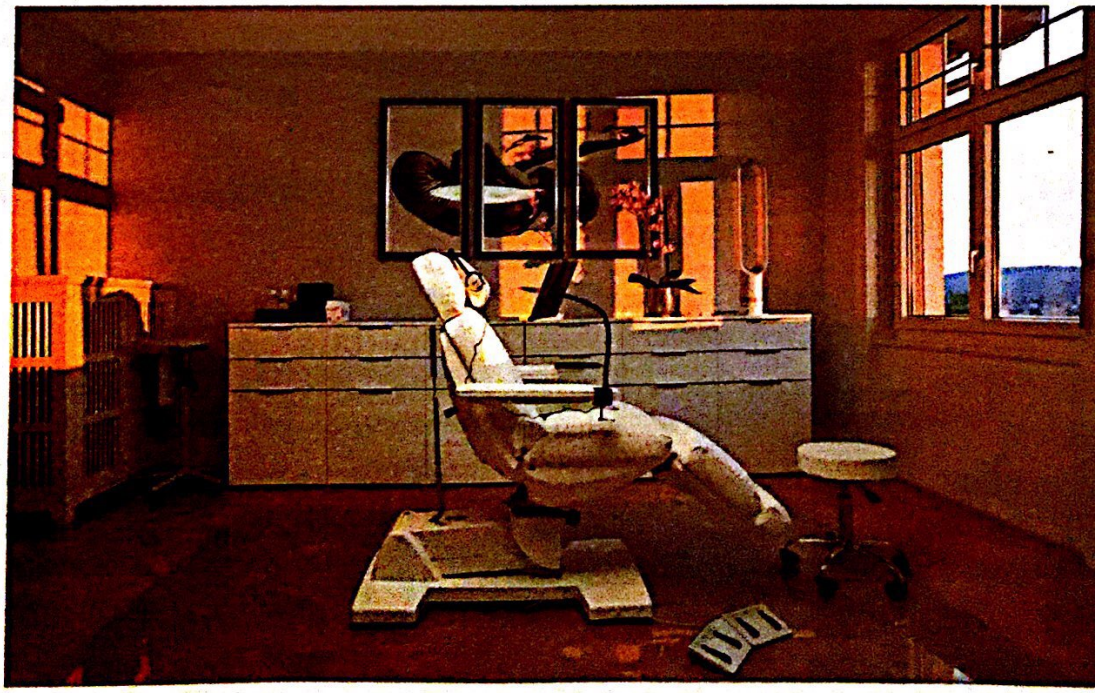
Welcome to the £57,000-a-week rehab

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By Annabel Fenwick Elli

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Fresh off a plane, but far from fresh, I emerge bleary-eyed, parched and jittery at the tail end of a week-long bender in Budapest. I am met at Zurich airport by a tall, impeccably dressed Swiss man who bundles me into a Bentley. I'm on my way to rehab. No ordinary rehab, but a £57,000-a-week, one-patient-only, state-of-the-art facility, which caters for the wealthiest, most secretive addicts in the world.

Although I'm clammy and have a headache, I'm in better shape than some of the others who have sat in this Bentley. 'One actress was so drunk she literally tumbled off her private jet when she arrived, and another, a royal, woke up at the clinic with absolutely no recollection of flying halfway across the world to get here,' says Jan Gerber, managing director of Paracelsus Recovery and one of its founders. He started the facility with his mother, a nurse, and his father, a psychiatrist, in 2012 with a single patient – an alcoholic chief executive whom they dried out in their spare room. Today, it attracts supermodels and Hollywood stars, as well as billionaire businesspeople, royals and heads of state, who are drawn equally to the anonymity it offers and its unique approach to kicking addiction.

Traditional treatment centres tend to follow the strict principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, the worldwide fellowship programme developed in the 1930s, which places strong emphasis on group sharing, surrendering to a higher power and the 12-step model – ultimately, the goal is sobriety. Patients here, however, don't necessarily share this goal. 'It works for some people, but AA is an 80-year-old archaic model that doesn't suit everyone, and there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to addiction,' says Gerber. 'For many clients, abstinence isn't the goal – they just want to bring their vices under control. We're motivational, not confrontational.'

The patient – there is only ever one at a time – is housed in an enormous glossy penthouse, along with a live-in therapist, personal chef, housekeeper, limousine driver and psychiatrist, as well as a nurse who is on call 24 hours a day. On average, they stay for four weeks, at a cost of £230,000.

It may sound more like a luxury hotel, but Gerber points out that denying someone not only their poison – usually alcohol; or it could be cocaine, sex or gambling – but also the living conditions to which they're accustomed, is counterproductive. 'There are clients who wouldn't agree to rehab under any other circumstances,' he says. 'If you're a billionaire who has never changed your own bed sheets, going to a facility where you're sharing a room and doing your own laundry isn't necessarily going to help cure your illness any more than sending someone who's never gone camping to undergo treatment in a tent.'

Gerber suddenly turns earnest. 'No matter who you are, or how much money you have, every human being deserves empathy and understanding for their situation.'

But still, is this really a glorified retreat that mollycoddles wealthy drunks, cocaine addicts and gamblers, then patches them up and sends them back to revert to their former ways? Or could it be – with some of the world's most pioneering doctors on its staff – a revolutionary approach to an age-old problem that might just be worth the price tag?

We pull up to a nondescript apartment block and I'm whisked to the top floor, where I will be staying: in a fragrant 820sq ft labyrinth of marble and oak, with scented candles and vases of fresh flowers dotted about, and bathroom drawers stocked with Molton Brown shower gels and shampoos, as well as alcohol-free mouthwash. ('Alcoholics will drink anything if they're desperate enough,' says Gerber.) There are views over the shimmering Lake Zurich, an enormous dining table that could comfortably seat 12, and a sofa in the bedroom suite the size of a small boat. All of this for only one patient?

'The Middle Eastern clients often bring an entourage,' Gerber explains, sometimes up to 50-strong, though generally they rent out a floor of the Park Hyatt close by and station themselves there. 'We had one Asian client who refused to even use the bathroom without an aide present,' he adds. 'It's a paranoia of being alone that comes with the territory for people of such high standing, and it can be a real problem.'

As we enter, I'm asked for my first name, then given a fictitious surname and birth date. 'Your real name is not required to check in,' Gerber says, with the silky prowess of a Bond villain. 'Often, we don't know who we'll be treating until they get here. Unless they have a famous face, clients can complete an entire four-week programme without us ever knowing their true identity.' For those who are recognisable (from billboards and the covers of magazines), great measures are taken to keep their presence under wraps – for example, the news is monitored for speculation as to their whereabouts and security keeps an eye out for lurking paparazzi.

> 'The Middle Eastern clients often bring an entourage.' Sometimes up to 50-strong. 'It's a paranoia of being alone that comes with the territory'

I'm not checked for contraband – in fact, nothing is taken away from me, not even my phone. 'For some clients, that just isn't an option,' Gerber says. 'We had one patient who had five phones – one for every business he runs. Of course that's a distraction we discourage, but it's almost never feasible for them to just vanish from their work duties.'

He recalls one TV star with alcohol addiction who would have lost her job had she checked into a traditional residential rehab. 'We flew her out, with her therapist, to appear on her once-weekly show, then flew her back here to continue treatment,' he says. Another client was an alcoholic mogul in desperate need of help, who was afraid he'd raise suspicion if he cancelled his annual Ibiza yacht bash. To save face, his therapist accompanied him undercover (steering him away from the champagne bar) and returned him to Paracelsus discreetly and in one piece, once the party was over. More extreme still, they once had a princess with a severe eating disorder who moved her therapist into the palace after leaving the clinic, for four years.

On my first night, I change wearily into the cloud-soft dressing gown that will be my uniform until I leave. And the next morning my therapist, Shaun, wakes me at 8am ready for a full day of emotional and anatomical prodding. I'm driven to a private clinic a few minutes down the road and ushered into a closed-off wing where a battery of bizarre tests is performed by Dr Ingrid Riedel. An eccentric German, she specialises in orthomolecular medicine, also known as megavitamin therapy, a complementary treatment that relies on supplements to correct biochemical imbalances and prevent disease.

I'm sceptical, though curious, as I'm hooked up to a Bicom machine that resembles something from a cartoon scientist's laboratory and is used to identify allergies. I already know that I'm allergic to fruit and, sure enough, the machine confirms this; likewise my hayfever – it specifies the trees and plant pollen that affect me the most – and depressingly, it signals that I'm intolerant to wheat and gluten, too. (I choose to disregard Dr Riedel's stern suggestion that I eliminate bread and pasta from my diet.)

Next, I'm put on a vitamin C-infused intravenous drip. I am pathetically wimpish when it comes to needles, but Dr Riedel flings on some disco music, activates a technicolour light show and twirls around the room in a heroic effort to distract me from the syringe.

Finally, I'm subjected to the Metatron, a diagnostic machine based on quantum physics, developed by the Russians during the space race, which is every bit as bewildering as it sounds. The purpose is to fully examine my insides. Splayed out on a reclining chair that's sprouting more cables than a jellyfish has tentacles, I watch Dr Riedel nodding and tutting as she moves the cursor from my foot joints to my heart chambers, then completes a 360-degree circuit of my brain.

The verdict? I don't drink enough water (true) – she can tell from my kidneys. I do absolutely no exercise (guilty) – and the low density of my bones shows this. Bafflingly, my liver has thus far survived all I've thrown at it over the years, but it is showing 'early signs of fatigue'.

After three hours of being weighed, measured, needled, scanned and scrutinised, I'm driven back to the penthouse armed with a small suitcase full of rattling pills, including vitamins, probiotics and homeopathic remedies. I'm instructed to swallow eight of them, three times a day.

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hangover on arrival), we treat these sessions as though I am a real patient. And during my final one, Dr Beck tells me something that changes everything.

It starts predictably enough. Yes, my father left when I was young; yes, I was an anguished teen; yes, I suffer from depression; yes, I've moved jobs and countries more times than I can count; yes, I drink a bottle of wine a night; no,

A steady stream of visitors – masseuse, acupuncturist, nutritionist, yoga teacher and personal trainer – arrive to tweak and tailor my regime

I can't sleep without background noise; oh, and today I was so bored during acupuncture that I counted the number of glass beads on the chandelier just to occupy the goblins in my head.

'You do know you might well have ADHD?' Dr Beck poses, his head tilted, with the faintest of smiles. 'Wine is an anaesthetic. It puts the goblins to sleep.'

Suddenly, it all makes sense – my forgetfulness, fidgeting, impatience, short attention span, even my tendency to finish other people's sentences and inability to have phone conversations without pacing the room, plus my never-ending struggle to unwind, even for a moment. These are all textbook adult symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a behavioural disorder, often diagnosed at an earlier age than it was in me, the signs of which include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

I was expecting to leave Paracelsus Recovery with plenty of insights for an article and, at best, a cure for that catastrophic hangover, but certainly not with a potential diagnosis that would change my life.

Since returning home to London, I've had a full assessment by an expert in adult ADHD and been prescribed the right medication. I no longer drink a bottle of wine a night and can happily say my goblins are more or less in check.

Admittedly, I still drink half a bottle most nights, my water intake remains low and I'm yet to take up exercise – Dr Riedel would be tutting and wagging her finger, but I think Gerber would be proud. That homosexual husband trapped in a heterosexual marriage is probably still struggling, but coping better than he was. That palace-bound anorexic princess might never thrive, but she survives. Paracelsus Recovery's refreshingly realistic approach to addiction and mental illness is applicable to all of us... you just have to be rich enough to afford it. ◆

REHABITAT

— Where else the rich, famous and troubled go

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